NGO PRESENTATION TO THE NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE, NEW YORK, APRIL 2002

CONSEQUENCES OF MIDDLE EAST NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION AND DEPLOYMENT

Speaker: Nouri Abdel-Razak, Secretary General of Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation

Mr. President, Honorable Delegates:

1. The first PrepCom meeting, April 8 to 19, 2002, convened in preparation for the 2005 Conference of the parties to the NPT, is taking place at a time of intensive tension, acute conflicts, threats with conventional and non-conventional weapons and even possible use of nuclear weapons.

The US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), recently revealed, asked the Pentagon to draft plans to target nuclear weapons at seven countries, five of them non-nuclear and four located in the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Libya. Other countries of the region may be threatened with nuclear weapons in the future. According to the NPR, nuclear weapons may also be used in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The review also calls for drafting plans to produce low-yield earth-penetrating nuclear weapons to burrow very deep into the earth and destroy hidden military facilities, a step which will herald a new era of actual use of nuclear weapons in military operations. Nuclear confrontation has now expanded from the North to regions in the South and East.

Allow me to say also that, while the danger of threat or use of nuclear weapons by terrorists of whatever stripe is real, the best and only way to keep such weapons out of the hands of terrorists is to get rid of them altogether.

Therefore, the PrepCom review of the implementation of disarmament measures endorsed by former NPT conferences assumes special importance. Among them are 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive effort to eliminate nuclear arsenals acquired by the US and other states. These steps are urgently needed to ensure the security of our people because the US has the intention to target and possible use its nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, included the four located in the Middle East.

Mr. President:

2. The document of the last NPT Conference “emphasizes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing”, particularly in regions fraught with tensions and conflicts. Sixteen steps were endorsed by the conference for the denuclearisation of the Middle East, South Asia and the Korean peninsula.
In the Middle East, Israel has acquired a nuclear arsenal of around 200 weapons, a fact which prompts other states of the region to seek weapons of mass destruction in order to counter the deadly threat of Israeli weapons. In addition, efforts are under way to equip the three Dolphin-class submarines provided to Israel by Germany with missiles which can carry nuclear weapons to undertake operations from the deep waters of the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Thus, a second strike nuclear capability will be available to Israel.

Furthermore, Theater Missile Defense Systems jointly produced by the US and Israel have been deployed in the region to destroy missiles that may be used by other states. Thus Israel will always be in a position to impose its will on the Palestine people and its neighbours as well.

To put an end to this dangerous situation, the 1995 NPT Conference adopted a resolution calling for “the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery vehicles.” Support for this project was confirmed by the 2000 NPT Conference which also urged Israel to accede to NPT and place its nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards. All other states of the region, Arab and non-Arab, had already adhered to NPT.

Mr. President:

3. Instead of implementing what has been approved by former NPT Conferences, the US has put in place its own counter-proliferation policy of using force combined with “effective nuclear deterrence”, based solely on its own decision, against any country hostile to its policy which may try to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Consequently, Middle East countries are facing at present two grave threats: Israeli nuclear threats and US nuclear threats and military operations with conventional and non-conventional weapons, while Israeli nuclear weapons are left intact. The impending US wars against Iraq and possibly Iran and the plans to target four Middle East countries testify to this fact. Therefore this PrepCom should resolve to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East in the period leading to the 2005 Review Conference.

Mr President:

4. I address you today as a member of civil society. The universality of the NPT and the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East are essential measures if the people in the region are ever to transcend the current atmosphere of violence and hatred and live together in peace.

The parties to NPT gathered at this PrepCom are requested to further their efforts for the implementation of the Middle East Resolution as well as all measures and agreements leading to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their total elimination.

**CONVENOR**: Bahig Nassar, Arab Coordinator Centre for NGOs